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SUBJECT: RECALL OF MOLDOVAN AMBASSADOR TO UN REFLECTS POLITICAL
FIGHT WITHIN RULING PARTY

Classified by: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d)

Recall of Ambassador...

1. (U) On February 27, the Cabinet recalled Ambassador Alexei
Tulbure, Moldova's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
Though the ambassador was appointed only 18 months ago, Deputy
Foreign Minister Kistruga, who attended the Cabinet meeting, told the
press it was just a regular rotation, as Tulbure had already been
overseas for seven years. (Tulbure had previously been Moldova's
Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe.) A day later, an
official government statement appeared in the press saying "Tulbure
was recalled at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
European Integration for violations committed in his capacity as Head
of Diplomatic Mission, resulting in disciplinary action against him."

... Reflects Behind-the-scene Political Fight

2. (C) Comment: We presume that a political power struggle within
the ruling Communist Party lies behind the recall of Ambassador
Tulbure. Tulbure has been a long-term opponent of Foreign Minister
Stratan. He was rumored as a possible replacement for Stratan in
2006-2007, when the latter appeared close to dismissal. Stratan
strongly dislikes Tulbure, who is part of the "young reformist group"
within the Communist Party. In the summer of 2007, Stratan had tried
to remove Tulbure through a presidential decree, which did not
succeed because Tkaciuk, Lupu, Sova and others blocked it. Tulbure
was known to ignore Stratan's instructions.

3. (C) Comment continued: Tulbure is an old friend of presidential
adviser Mark Tkaciuk. As such, his political star was promoted by
the President's administration, and he earlier enjoyed Voronin's
trust. Stratan, who is in open conflict with the influential
Tkaciuk, joined the other faction within the Communist Party, the
so-called "conservative wing," led by Deputy Prime-Minister Stepaniuc
and head of the Communist faction within Parliament, Ostapciuc. Both
conservative leaders support Stratan and oppose Tkaciuk and his team.
We understand that relations between Stratan and Tkaciuk are so
strained that the two have gone a couple of years without speaking to
each other - requiring other government ministers to pass messages
between the two. We assume that the conservative wing of the Party
supported Stratan's request for Tulbure's dismissal, thus weakening
one of the key allies of the President's influential advisor.
Tulbure's dismissal is a sign that the conservative wing has won an
intra-party victory on the eve of the upcoming (March 15) Party
Congress.

KIRBY